

Landa Rock Mill  
N. side of Landa St.  
(near entrance to Landa Park)  
New Braunfels  
Comal County  
Texas

HABS No. TEX 3251

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. TEX 3251

LANDA ROCK MILL

Location: On the north side of Landa Street near the entrance to Landa Park in the city of New Braunfels, Comal County, Texas.  
Latitude: 29° 42' 33" N Longitude: 98° 07' 49" W

Present Owner: H. Dittlinger Roller Mills Company

Present Occupant and Use: It is now used for storage as a part of the feed mill of the Dittlinger Mills.

Statement of Significance: Soon after the founding of New Braunfels a water-powered mill was erected on this site. This masonry building was built in 1875 by Joseph Landa to replace an earlier wood structure, and since that date it has been an important part of one of the leading industries of the city.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION:

A. Physical History:

1. General History: In 1842 the "Verein zum Schutze deutscher Einwanderer in Texas" (Society for the Protection of German Immigrants in Texas) was formed in Germany. Prince Carl of Solms-Braunfels, director of the Verein, purchased a large remote tract north of the Llano River, but when the first scheduled settlers began arriving at Texas ports in July 1844, it was quite urgent to acquire a location nearer to the coast. A small tract was purchased at the junction of the Comal and Guadalupe Rivers. The first settlers arrived in March 1845, and the town was named Neu (New) Braunfels.
2. Ownership and Development of the Mill: From Maria Antonia de Veramendi Garza and husband Raphael C. Garza the 480 acre Comal Springs tract was purchased in June 1847 by William H. Merriwether. Using slaves he dug the millrace and then built a grist mill on the site of the present masonry building; later he added a flour mill, a sawmill and a cotton gin. Joseph Landa had arrived in San Antonio in 1843 and two years later came to New Braunfels; then in 1859 he acquired the property which included the springs, millrace and mills. For a time the milling business thrived and in 1875 he built on the same site the three-story masonry building which became known as Landa Rock Mill. In this building he

installed a 40 horsepower turbine but continued to use the traditional millstone system of producing flour. By 1891 business was falling off; but Joseph and his son Harry bought a larger turbine and installed the Hungarian Roller system, and the Landa Mills again became an important industry of the city. The beautiful area with the springs and small lake were opened in 1898 to the public as Landa Park; the park was purchased by the City of New Braunfels in 1936. The mill properties were sold in 1927 by Harry Landa to an investment company; they are now owned by the H. Dittlinger Roller Mills Company.

3. Historical Persons Connected with the Structure: William H. Merriwether had operated a mill and plantations in Shelby County, Tennessee. He purchased the Comal Springs tract in 1847, built and operated the mills for about a dozen years, and then sold them to Landa. Merriwether continued to operate plantations in Comal and Bexar Counties.

Joseph Landa, of Jewish ancestry, was born, February 7, 1811 at Kempen in Prussia. He came to New York in 1843 and then to San Antonio in 1845; he made significant real estate investments there, but after 1847 his life centered in New Braunfels where he operated a general store and then purchased the Merriwether Mills in 1859. He was successful, but in the 1880's the old type mills could no longer compete; however, Harry Landa, his youngest son, installed new equipment in 1891 and rejuvenated the business. Joseph Landa died in 1896. In 1927 Harry Landa sold the properties to an investment company.

4. Date of Erection: 1875
5. Builder: There is no information about the designer or builder. Although the stonework is quite like that of other buildings by local German masons, the general structural form follows that of the mill construction of New England of the 1870's.

B. Bibliography:

Haas, Oscar. History of New Braunfels and Comal County, 1844-1946. Austin, Texas: The Steck Company, 1968.

Landa, Harry. As I Remember, San Antonio, 1945.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER:

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: A three-story stone-masonry flour mill that was erected in 1875. Its massive stone walls are characteristic of the German craftsmanship of the area; but its general structural form follows that of the New England mill construction of the 1870's.
2. Condition of the Fabric: The exterior stone masonry walls and the heavy timber interior framing are sturdily built and are in good condition. The adjacent mill structures of wood and sheetmetal are not well maintained. During the flood of 1972 water rose to a point two and one-half feet above the first floor.

B. Technical Description of the Exterior:

1. Three floors, now used for grain and feed storage; basement below formerly occupied by the turbines; a low attic above. Rectangular in plan, 30' x 74' in size. Attached mill buildings are of wood or metal construction.
2. Foundations: Built adjacent to an earthen dam that forms the mill pond. The stone masonry foundation walls extend below the basement turbine room.
3. Wall construction: The ashlar limestone walls are of squared, hand-dressed blocks of locally-quarried stone. The wall thicknesses are: 28" - 1st to 2nd; 24" - 2nd to 3rd; and 18" - 3rd to attic. Wide joints of the lime mortar are quite evident.
4. Floor and roof framing: The floor joists are supported by the exterior walls and a center row of longitudinal wood columns. Column sizes: 10" x 10" on 1st floor, 10" x 12" longitudinal beam; 8" x 8" on 2nd floor, 8" x 10" beam; 7" x 7" on 3rd floor, 7" x 10" beam. Floor joists are 2" x 12", 18" on center. Asbestos board has been added to fireproof the ceilings. The rafters of the roof are 2" x 8".
5. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Entrance doors on the ends of the building were cased in wood, but with additions these

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are now untrimmed masonry openings with heavy stone lintels above.

- b. Windows: On the 1st level there are only three windows on the west side; on the two levels above there are seven openings, one at each bay. Openings have heavy stone lintels and stone sills. These sash are double-hung, six-over-six. The attic is lighted with three windows on each end and small openings under the side eaves.

6. Roof:

- a. The ridge roof is 4 in 12 pitch, sheetmetal covered. The end walls extend up square, with the central portion pedimented. They are topped with carefully-cut stone copings.
- b. Eaves: The rafters project about three feet, with a fascia board forming the undecorated eaves.

C. Technical Description of the Interiors:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: The space has massive piers under the interior columns and several levels to accomodate the turbines. There is no machinery remaining.
- b. First floor: The rectangular open space has a row of six wood columns down the middle. In the south-east corner there is a hydraulic freight elevator; in the northwest corner a wooden stair leads to the upper floors.
- c. Upper floors: Second and third floors are similar in plan and arrangement to the first.

- 2. Flooring: The basement floor is of carefully-laid stone; portions have been covered with concrete. The first and upper floors are hardwood (3").

- 3. Wall and ceiling finish: The interior walls are hammer-dressed stone, unplastered. Ceilings are asbestos board

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applied to the underside of the joists. Floor-to-floor heights are: 14'-0" - 1st to 2nd; 12'-4" - 2nd to 3rd; 12'-4" - 3rd to attic.

- D. Site: The narrow rectangular building is oriented north and south. When first erected it stood alone on the edge of the millpond, but it is now almost surrounded by the other random structures of the mill. It is located on the north side of Landa Street near the entrance to Landa Park.

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